

more input regarding water testing

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To: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>;

Neal –

I wanted to provide more input, in hopes that it will provide the clarity we're seeking – that you recognize that no SPS drinking water sources have elevated levels of lead and that a story saying as much is incorrect and misleading.

You'd written a couple of questions to me on 1/18, after I took a first stab at summarizing things to you. I provide some more input below.

You'd also written a note to some members of the Broadview-Thomson PTA, and I've got a small bit of input for that, too.

Your note to Broadview-Thomson PTA:

- It'd be helpful to talk with a parent or two from Broadview, as the campus has the highest number of drinking water sources with elevated levels of lead in Seattle Public Schools. The school does not have any drinking water sources with elevated levels of lead.

Your questions to me on 1/18:

- Can you clarify which drinking water sources and non-drinking water sources I'm mixing up? It appears you're mixing any and all of them. There are no drinking water sources at SPS that test higher than 10ppb/lead. Further, most are under 5ppb. This is reflected in the reporting charts and has been repeatedly shared with you via email and in person.
- If you mean the faucets at a school like Broadview-Thomson, why would they be included in the drinking water quality tests if the district does not consider them a drinking water source? While data from water testing of sinks is part of the overall drinking water testing report, they (faucets/sinks) are not drinking water sources and have never been identified as such. The students and staff at all schools know that faucets and sinks are not drinking water sources. These facts have been repeatedly explained to you. (Also, the head of the safety committee at Broadview-Thomson says it has never been an issue...that students think non-drinking water sources are drinking water sources.) We have made a small modification to the testing pages on our website, adding this verbiage that makes it even clearer: "**Sinks (S in the report) are not considered drinking water sources.** We recognize that there is the potential for students to want to drink from classroom hand-washing sinks, so we test all of those. Where a student's choice to drink from a sink could be a problem, we post a reminder sign, as we do at all restroom sinks." Prior to making this modification to the website, our signage protocol was repeatedly shared with you via email and in person, as was the fact that sinks aren't drinking water sources.
- Can you also detail, beyond posting a sign near the faucet, what guidance the school district provides to students to make sure they don't fill water bottles or cups from fixtures with such elevated levels of lead? We don't have any additional protocol or input for students, other than complete awareness on staff's part and taking any necessary steps, should they be called for. Of course, teachers are aware of the fact that sinks are not drinking water sources and would provide such guidance as required – i.e., if a student is seen using the non-drinking water source for drinking water. But, again, teachers and students know that faucets and sinks are not drinking water sources.
- Rather, we (use) the district's own testing data, Rachel's analysis of the numbers and my confirmation of her findings. This gets to what appears to be a fundamental error in your reporting: our data doesn't indicate drinking water sources with more than 10ppb/lead. Rachel's "analysis of the numbers" is flawed because she is identifying *non-drinking water sources* as *drinking water sources*. If you include sinks – non-drinking water sources – there are some sources that are above 10ppb/lead. But, again, these aren't drinking water sources, which is something that students and staff at schools are aware of. And, if a sink (a non-drinking water source) is tested above 10ppb/lead, a sign is posted to underscore the fact that it isn't a drinking water source. These are also facts we've repeatedly shared with you.

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